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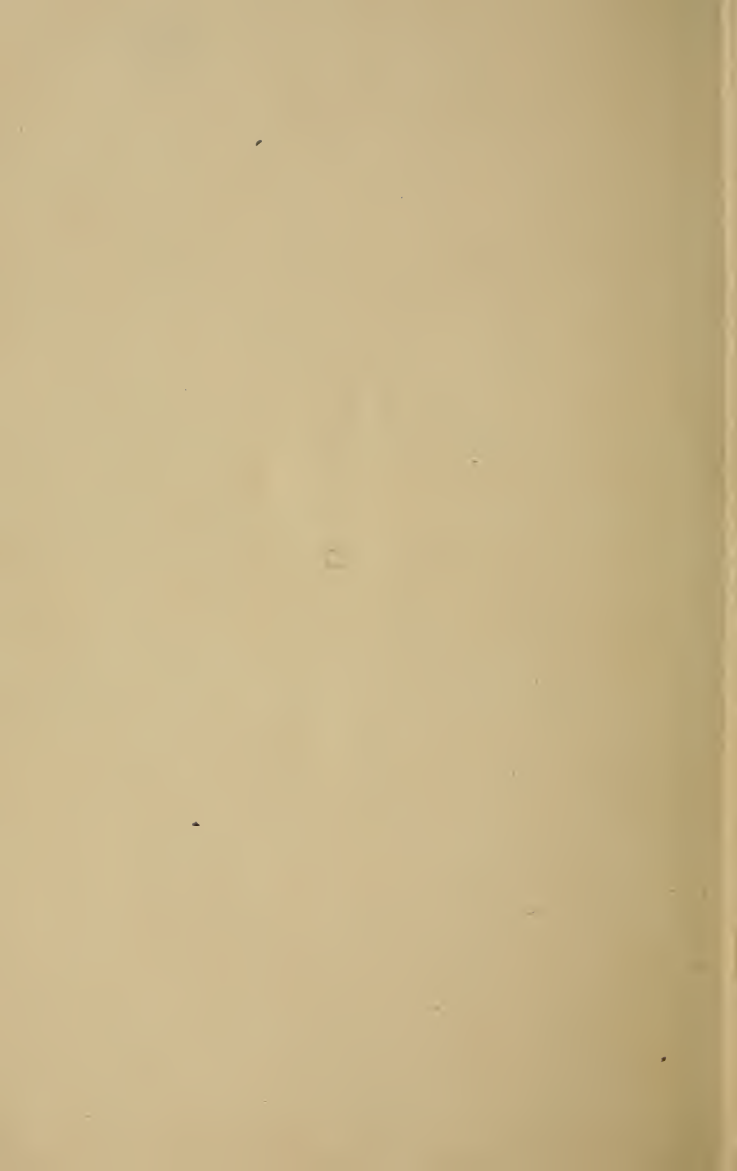
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ENGLAND'S

LAST QUEEN.

E. D. Mallace



ENGLAND'S

LAST QUEEN.

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A POEM FOR PARLOR AND OFFICE,

BY THE AUTHOR OF "STRIFE."

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## ENGLAND'S LAST QUEEN.

BY MRS. E. D. WALLACE.

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"As we entered the barge our loquacious rower directed our attention to Her Majesty's barge, on its way to Hampton Court Palace. The pathetic air of the boatman as he related a little incident, that may or may not be true, affected my already wearied spirits, and all the way down the Thames I reverized over the picture he had drawn of the poor Queen's sorrow till it assumed the vividness of a prophetic vision. Take it as it is, for the sake of the sentiment."

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# ENGLAND'S LAST QUEEN.

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## I.

"Top of the tide, Mum ! Beautiful water !"

"None but a waterman says it, I ween."

Half angered, half wistfully queried the boatman.

But dreamed not he gazed in the face of the  
Queen.

## II.

"A strange mood is in her," the ladies had  
whispered,

When suddenly rising, "We may not restrain  
Such grief!" she exclaimed, but no tears

Dimmed her eyes, as she bade them remain

## III.

In the Audience Chamber—the Chamber of  
Horrors

To her, when, in all the gay throng, only one  
Form she saw—and that form a shadow,

A pale, mocking shadow of him that was gone.

## IV.

So abruptly that morning she left them,  
Her ladies and children, and hastened away,  
Well knowing however her wishes were slighted,  
The royal command none would dare disobey.

## V.

Poor widow! great Queen! ah! the first was  
she that day.  
The humblest peasant in all her wide realm  
Knew not such poverty, such craving hunger,  
As threatened her reason itself to o'erwhelm.

## VI.

“Only to see him and hear him one moment.”  
That was the longing she could not repress;  
That was the burden of all her complaining.  
These simple words told a great Queen's  
distress.

VII.

“No one to call me VICTORIA ; no one  
 To shield from the arrows of envy and hate;  
 No one for love’s sake, when counsel is needed,  
 To guide and uphold through the weary  
 debate.”

VIII.

“For years of devotion and service beseeching  
 But hours and moments of gracious relief  
 From pageants and cares, my prayers are rejected  
 With jeers for indulgence in vain, selfish  
 grief!”

IX.

Oh, England! you boast of your strength and  
 your prestige,  
 In sackcloth and ashes for this sin atone;  
 For what other nation enlightened as you are  
 Makes pitiless war on one woman alone?

X.

'You're teaching the Prince to despise the Queen-mother.

Have a care! for each stroke that recoils with  
a spring,  
While smiting her breast, may yet mould for  
your future  
An obdurate heart in a vindictive King.

XI.

But hear what the people, your compeers, are  
saying—

These people through Parliament's traitors  
have seen—

"All hail! to the great heart that has been and  
shall be

REGINA VICTORIA; but—*England's last Queen!*"

XII.

"Top of the tide, Mum! Beautiful water!"

"None but a waterman says it, I ween."

Half angered, half wistfully queried the boatman,  
But dreamed not he gazed in the face of the  
Queen.



XIII.

A barge decked with flags and gay ribands  
streamed by them.

“Whose barge may that be?” she bethought  
her to say.

“The Queen’s, Mum, God bless her; and long  
may Old England

Be ruled by the Queen who reigns o’er us  
to-day!”

XIV.

Sweet tears! let them flow; Oh, woman and  
widow!

Nor fear that the boatman will mock at your  
grief,

Nor the tremulous joy that is stirred in your  
bosom,

Long barred from the sympathy now your  
relief.

XV.

Her smile, when he called the notorious river—

The black, murky Thames—a beautiful stream,  
He forgot, nor thought, when the barge had  
passed by them,

To protect his bared head from the sun’s  
scorching beam.

## XVI.

He looked at the sad woman weeping before  
him,

Looked after the royal barge gliding along,  
And whispered: "Ah, Madame, Her Majesty's  
sorrows

Have left us no heart for the 'Waterman's  
Song.'"

## XVII.

"But why is the royal barge flaunting with  
ribands,

And why are the bargemen so gaily attired?"

"The Prince Consort's orders, Mum. Nobles'  
and subjects'

Respect for her birthdays he always required."

## XVIII.

She entered the barge; bade the boatman row  
swiftly

Till evening threw round her its own dusky  
veil.

"I may not so enter the palace," she murmured;  
The guards must not see my face tear stained  
and pale."

XIX.

The sun slowly sinking illumined a fountain  
 Where silver and golden fish came at the call  
 Of children, who shouted with glee at their haste  
 To secure the sweet morsels abundant for all.

XX.

The sunset was regal, as round his couch  
 gathered,  
 Like pale, spectral mourners, the fair, fleecy  
 clouds ;  
 No drapery bordered with blue or with amber,  
 But clothed in pure white like the dead in  
 their shrouds.

XXI.

Yet scarce had the sun-god been veiled from  
 her vision—  
 The Queen's—who regarded this royal death  
 scene  
 As a type, it may be, of the hour approaching  
 When she too must die, though a mother and  
 Queen.

XXII.

The last look scarce given, when lo! all these  
watchers

In purple and crimson and gold were arrayed.  
"He leaves them the riches they prize, though  
reflecting

No glory on him o'er whose wealth they have  
preyed."

XXIII.

So murmured the Queen; and the children  
laughed gaily,

For over the fountain that last golden beam  
Threw a light that revealed the fish still in  
commotion

To secure the last crumb falling into the ream.

XXIV.

"The children are happy, nor dream that I  
grudge them

That one golden ray to stream over the walls  
Of the palace which Time—no respecter of  
persons—

Preserves not from tempest or rain as it falls.

XXV.

“The masonry crumbled, the sculpture disfigured,  
 No gilding—not even the sun’s could adorn—  
 But through the stained windows one gleam  
     could restore me  
 The pride of *my* palace the day I was born.”

XXVI.

Now evening closed round her, and giving the  
     bargeman  
 A fee for his service, she hurried away  
 Towards the palace where torches were flaring  
     and streaming  
 In search of the Queen “who was missing  
     that day.”

XXVII.

“And who may she be?” said the boatman, and  
     peered  
 Through the dark till no longer her form  
     could be seen.  
 A voice, like the wail of a spirit in sorrow,  
 Sobbed low : “’TIS VICTORIA, ENGLAND’S LAST  
     QUEEN.”



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By Mrs. E. D. WALLACE.

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